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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 003124

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SUBJECT: GOV EFFORTS TO COMBAT TIPS

REF: CARACAS 03025

Classified By: Abelardo A. Arias, Political Counselor,
for Reason 1.4(d)

Summary

1. (C) Venezuela's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) chairs a 22-person interdepartmental working group that meets approximately once a month to coordinate efforts to combat trafficking in persons. Representatives from the MFA and the Ministry of Interior and Justice (MIJ) told Poloff on September 27, 28 and 30, that specific action plans for individual Ministries have been identified, and they will begin implementation in late October. The national investigative police (CICPC) is currently working on 2 international human trafficking case involving 7 women. The GOV appears more energized on TIP, and we will continue to engage them on this issue. End Summary.

Meetings and Plans

2. (C) National investigative police (CICPC) Interpol division commissioner Henry Matos told Poloff September 27 that he and other Ministry of Interior and Justice (MIJ) personnel were part of a working group chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Matos said the MFA has provided courses in spreading awareness, prevention, and coordination (interagency and international) to representatives of 15 different Ministries or agencies. Matos provided Poloff with a sample of an awareness and prevention pamphlet the GOV intends to print and distribute as part of its awareness campaign. He also provided a four-page plan produced by the MFA as a result of what Matos said were monthly meetings. According to the plan, the MIJ's Directorate General of Crime Prevention would act as a clearinghouse for human trafficking cooperation.

3. (C) Mirna Lopez, MIJ Assistant Director of Crime Prevention, told Poloff on September 28 that the MIJ planned to launch pilot training programs for law enforcement, government officials, and civil society at the end of October. The pilot programs would include awareness, prevention and coordination training. If the pilots are successful, Lopez said the MIJ would expand the program to regularly scheduled training sessions by the first quarter of 2005.

4. (C) On September 30, MFA Director for International Organized Crime, Drugs, and Corruption, Ana Cassadore, confirmed that the pamphlet provided by Matos was to be printed and distributed to all consulates by the end of October. Cassadore said the Ministry of Education would also be distributing the pamphlets within Venezuela. Asked about statistics to determine the extent of the problem in Venezuela, Cassadore said the National Statistics Institute was "just now" being invited to take part in the working group. Cassadore and Otilia Kaufman from the Crime Prevention Unit of the MIJ noted that the draft Law Against Organized Crime makes trafficking in persons punishable by 8-10 years in prison, and has provisions for additional time if the victim is a child or if trafficking was done for sexual exploitation. However, the law has languished in the National Assembly since 2001. Cassadore asserted that the MFA twice in 2004 requested action on the proposed law, but could do no more. Lopez, Kaufman, and Cassadore all asserted that the lack of legislation would not prevent the Ministries' implementation of the current action plans.

5. (C) As in meeting with human rights officer September 21 (reftel), Cassadore reiterated the GOV's interest in being removed from Tier 3 early. She asked that the Embassy send an amended report that "accurately" reflects GOV's efforts to combat human trafficking. Poloff told Cassadore that it would be prudent to review the information regarding GOV efforts before discussing next steps.

Work in Progress

16. (C) Commissioner Matos pointed out that indirectly, using existing laws against kidnapping or child protection laws, the CICPC can obtain warrants to arrest perpetrators and cooperate with international law enforcement to secure the safe return of victims. Matos said CICPC is working on two international human trafficking cases involving 7 women. Mexican law-enforcement officials cooperated with CICPC to return two trafficked women to their families, but CICPC is still working to apprehend the perpetrator in Venezuela. According to Matos, five women were also trafficked to Spain, but despite cooperation with Spanish law-enforcement, the GOV has been unable to secure their return and apprehend those responsible.

Comment

17. (C) MFA and MIJ have put effort into developing a coordinated action plan to combat human trafficking. While concrete plans appear to have been developed, so far there has been only training for working group representatives. Efforts to go beyond awareness and prevention plans will continue to be hampered as long as there is a lack of anti-trafficking legislation. The recent coordination between the MFA and the Interior (police) Ministry is positive, as is the current CICPC effort. While they will never admit it, the TIP sanctions have motivated the GOV to take some concrete steps.

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